Amendments to “National Medical Commission Bill”

What is the issue?

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- National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill proposes to overhaul the medical administration in the country.
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- The government is hence said to be considering significant amendments to the Bill - based on the recommendations of the parliamentary committee.
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What is NMC bill?

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- NMC Bill intends to replace “Medical Council of India” (MCI) with “National Medical Commission” (NMC), as the chief regulator for medical education.
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- The initial draft of the bill became highly controversial due to the sweeping changes that it proposed – which saw set of intense debates.
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- Hence, it is said that the government is considering making changes to some significant provisions in the original bill.
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What are the significant aspects of the bill?

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Exit Exam

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- It has been proposal to adapt the final MBBS examination into a National Exit Test (NEXT), in order to ensure a standardised potency for practice.
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- The present MBBS curriculum is said to be more theoretical in its approach to learning and assessment, and breeds memory based studying.
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- As there is little attention is paid to testing conceptual soundness and problem solving ability – a standardised exit exam might help in overcoming these.
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- While the exact structure of the proposed NEXT isn't clear, it is expected to be a mix of "descriptive and multiple choice questions".
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- Such standardised and quality testing is likely to nudge universities to improve their quality of teaching and assessment.
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- Significantly, the bill needs further clarity is the provisions for students to retake the exam in case of failure (or needing score improvement).
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Integrating Medical Streams

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- There are nearly 7,70,000 qualified AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) doctors in the country.
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- A bride course was initially proposed for AYUSH practitioners to hand out allopathic medication – but this evoked the strongest protests.
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- Including AYUSH doctors to the allopathic pool will enhance India's doctor-patient ratio to a decent 1:1000 – but there are inherent risks in such moves.
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- A mere bridge course for AYUSH doctors to permit them practice modern medicine is a threat to the very integrity of our medical landscape.
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- Hence, this idea is likely to be scrapped, although some AYUSH doctors serving in remote areas currently do provide for limited allopathic drugs.
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Addressing Quackery

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- Nearly 70% of primary care in rural India is provided by informal providers, and quackery is indeed rampant.
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- Considering the pathetic shortage of medical practitioners, can be potentially useful resources if they are institutionalised with considerable safeguards.
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- They can be trained under short-term courses to create medical assistants entrusted with primary curative, and preventive care.
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Source: Indian Express

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